

California Biodiversity Council

Meeting Notes

November 12-13, 1998

Susanville, California

Members present

Doug Wheeler, Resources Agency
Nancy Huffman, Northern California Counties Association
Lynn Sprague, USDA Forest Service
Jim Shevock, National Park Service
Frank Michny, Bureau of Reclamation
Randy Brown, Department of Water Resources
Don Koch, Department of Fish and Game
Bob Haussler, California Energy Commission
John Schramel, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
Bud Laurent, South Central Coast Regional Association
Cathy Bleier, Department of Conservation
Diana Jacobs, State Lands Commission
Ken Jones, Department of Parks and Recreation
Jim Branham, Resources Agency
Al Wright, Bureau of Reclamation
Alex Glazer, University of California
Robert Meacher, Regional Council of Rural Counties
Hal Salwasser, USDA Forest Service
Diane Holcomb, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Jerry Harmon, San Diego Association of Governments
Richard Wilson, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Alexis Strauss, Environmental Protection Agency
Debbie Maxwell, USGS-Biological Resources Division
Beth Stevens, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Doug Balmain, San Joaquin Valley Regional Association of California Counties
Bud Laurent, South Central Coast Regional Association

Report of the Executive Committee

- Follow-up from the RCRC/CBC meeting of September 16, 1998

At the RCRC/CBC meeting there were three requests for the Executive Committee to investigate. The request that the CBC staff has most focused on was a request that a representative from the Economic Development be included as a partner in CBC the CBC staff has been investigating contacts and is preparing a listing of the advantages for including them into the organization.

- Work Plan Status report

The 1998/99 workplan was presented to the Council in May, 1998. As a part the workplan, CBC was to take a more active role in watershed projects throughout State. The staff has since focused on countywide efforts and entered into discussions with Placer County to offer assistance in their watershed efforts. As a result, we have since entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the County to assist in their open space plan.

- **California Biodiversity Project**

In 1993, through help with the Defenders of Wildlife, an Oregon Biodiversity Project was established to develop a statewide strategy to conserve Oregon's natural biological diversity. A document was produced which outlined the strategy, mapped important biological areas, and highlighted actions landowners, resource managers and policy makers can take to implement the strategy. This was a collaborative effort involving the business community, timber industry, cattle industry, the Nature Conservancy, Defenders, and CH2M Hill. A meeting was recently held with Ken Smith who is under contract with Defenders to determine if a similar effort should be started in this state.

- **CBC Meeting Calendar**

The next meeting of the CBC will be held in Davis on March 11, 1999. The Fort Bragg regional meeting will be June 9-10, 1999. The third meeting of the year will be at Lake Tahoe on October 6-7 and will be held in conjunction with the RCRC/CARCD meeting. The final meeting of the year will be December 10, 1999.

- **Staffing Needs**

There are more requests and demands on the CBC staff to accomplish particular tasks as the CBC has grown. In addition, many of the former staff members have moved on to different jobs thereby leaving key vacancies (e.g., an editor for CBC news). It is important that each of the CBC members provide at least one staff member to assist the other staff members.

Council Announcements

- **Resources Agency – Investing in California's Natural Heritage: A Forum on Land Conservation Funding, December 10, 1998**

Secretary Wheeler invited Council members to participate in a forum hosted by the Resources Agency, California Environmental Dialogue, Californians and the Land, and Bank of America. This funding forum will bring together diverse stakeholders who have an interest in investing in environmental and natural resource protection. Issues to be explored include: the impacts increased population will place on our natural resources, programs currently in place to protect wildlife habitat, watersheds, agricultural lands and open space, ways to facilitate broader coordination and more effective utilization of existing land conservation funding, and programs to protect the state's natural diversity in the 21st century. Nationally known speakers from Florida, New Jersey and Colorado will discuss conservation programs and funding mechanisms utilized in their states.

- **Bureau of Land Management – Headwaters Update**

In November 1997, President Clinton signed legislation providing \$250 million as the federal share for acquisition of the 7,500-acre Headwaters old-growth forest in Humboldt County. In May 1998, Governor Wilson included the state's \$130 million share of the funding in his 1998-99-state budget and the legislature appropriated the money. Work is nearing completion for the acquisition that is scheduled for March 1, 1999

- Department of Fish and Game Organizational Changes

Ron Rempel is now Deputy Director for the new Habitat Conservation division, and Susan Cochrane will assume the position of Chief of the new Habitat Conservation Planning Branch. Jack Edwards is Chief of the Conservation Education Office. Ryan Broddrick will continue to serve as Chief Deputy Director. The headquarters reorg consolidated nine divisions into four: Wildlife and Inland Fisheries, Habitat Conservation, Administration, and the Office of Spill Prevention and Response. By reducing the number of divisions, DFG hopes to more effectively and efficiently coordinate related programs and activities and make it easier for the public to understand how licenses and other revenue sources are applied to the widely varied programs and fish and wildlife protection responsibilities of the Department.

- USDA Forest Service – Sierra Nevada Conservation Framework Update: Sprague retirement

Lynn Sprague announced that Kent Connaughton (former Lassen National Forest Supervisor from Susanville) has accepted the position as Deputy Regional Forester in charge of the Sierra Nevada Framework Project. Danny Lee will be Kent's counterpart from the PSW Research Station and this will be a joint project between the PSW Region and PWS Station. Staff from the research station and national forest management is being organized to complete an EIS that will address management changes on the 11 national forests in the Sierra Nevada. Issues that will be addressed in the EIS will be old forests, riparian/aquatic ecosystems, fire and fuels management, west-side foothill woodlands, and noxious weeds. The Forest Service will actively seek involvement from many of the Council agencies with the EIS and larger Framework Project.

- University of California – Sierra Nevada Network for Education and Research (SNNER)

SNNER and related activities are currently a major program focus for the 10th University of California campus being built in Merced. Frank Davis, on the faculty of UC Santa Barbara and a former SNEP Science Team member, has taken over the direction of the program. The program is aimed at bringing the scientific research results of SNEP, in useable form, to decision-makers, in the form of data, technical expertise, and models to support planning.

Watershed Program and Policies: Potential Role of the CBC

The afternoon session of the November 11, 1998 California Biodiversity Council business meeting included an open forum on the challenges associated with meeting water quality and biodiversity goals in California's watersheds. All Council members joined in the discussion and asked questions of their own as they related to watershed program coordination from a policy perspective. A two-hour time period was allotted to address this topic. The desired outcome was to determine if there is a role for the California Biodiversity Council in coordinating watershed program policies and if so, what the role should be.

The discussion focused on the problems associated with overlapping watershed programs and policies. It was recognized that a statewide coordination mechanism is lacking between the various federal and state watershed program efforts. Without coordination, there is a high likelihood for conflicting policy implementation and duplicative efforts to gather watershed information, perform watershed assessments, inventory watershed groups and projects, perform

public outreach, design watershed monitoring programs, etc. Confusion at the local level also has been expressed, as state and federal programs are separately implemented.

The entity addressing this issue was the Watershed Protection and Restoration Council (WPRC) charged with developing a California Watershed Protection Program. The WPRC was established by Executive Order to provide oversight and coordination of State activities related to watershed protection and enhancement, with an emphasis on local initiatives. The WPRC terminated January 1999. A final WPRC document (12/98) was produced that included specific recommendations for improved watershed coordination between all levels of government to protect California's anadromous fisheries. The following is a summary of the California Biodiversity Council's comments on the potential role of the Council in implementing the WPRC recommendations for watershed program coordination.

State-level Program and Policy Coordination and Oversight

Suggested roles for CBC

- Provide better coordination with CALFED. Look at CalFed Principles of participation
- Assist with the development of Statewide legislation (if it happens)
- Serve as advisory on establishment of protocols and standards, funding mechanisms, fostering program coordination
- Provide facilitation to identify overall sense of watershed goals and to broaden participant's viewpoints to bring watershed stakeholders together
- Support local leadership, increase funding, standardize approaches, identify priority watersheds, provide accounting system on progress and needs, and coordinate role of field agency staff to meet needs
- Support county land use planning processes, as well as specific water supply and watershed planning
- Continue inviting local watershed groups to CBC to describe projects and problems; meet with them at all CBC functions; assist locals with problem-solving
- Coordinate statewide watershed programs and activities
- Bring together the different stewardship efforts

Suggested approaches for CBC

- Need to change institutional behavior and develop better track records for the various aspects of watershed management
- Need to share experiences and define challenges
- Need to promote a sense of stewardship. Local staff need ownership in the process and shouldn't work to fulfill specific agency missions; allow staff the time.
- Focus on the positive
- Don't just focus on "easy-to-restore" watersheds - all funding would go to NoCal
- Pay attention to linkages between watersheds
- Need flexibility for complex ownership situations
- Ensure separation of scientific recommendations from policy decisions
- Look beyond primary floodplain into terrestrial landscape of watershed
- Don't solve everyone's problems; show them how to solve it themselves with a set of different approaches that can be adapted locally
- Involve agencies more as a team player
- Take advantage of existing databases, relationships, and responsibilities to establish priorities and focus resources
- Develop goals top-down (CBC) and strategies bottom-up to achieve goals.

Recommended actions for CBC

- Determine whether this will be a top-down or bottom-up approach (or when to take either approach)
- Identify financial commitment - who will pay?
- Identify and focus on important resources, what's in good or bad shape, get biggest bang for buck
- Identify most strategic watersheds - CalFed and BDAC not doing this
- Consider how to get CBC involved as new player in existing watershed efforts without disrupting productive processes; develop a CBC marketing strategy to target watershed groups
- Identify resource needs and human needs to determine priorities
- Reinvent CalFed and BDAC
- Determine what can be done at different scales (e.g., can you do community-based planning at the basin scale?)
- Find resources to give to local entities to est. watershed coordinators (state/fed. facilitation doesn't work)
- Establish a reporting mechanism so that we're accountable to each other

Technical Assistance

- CBC should help standardize inventory systems and methods, reporting mechanisms. Locals will let us know what's working, what is not.
- Explore the use of the proposed California Biodiversity Project to satisfy some of the technical aspects of watershed management
- Identify problems from natural and man-made sources
- Need collaborative guidelines for what we're looking for in watershed protection

Regulatory Coordination

- Support efforts to streamline permitting for watershed enhancement/ restoration projects

Information Management and Sharing

- Use the Science Coordinating Committee to coordinate both existing and new watershed information and make it available to all interested parties
- Promote a unified framework to serve and access watershed information from all of the CBC organizations
- Provide information to managers and planners
- Hold user workshops to refine databases

Coordinated Funding Cycles and Review Processes

- Direct funding at headwaters of watersheds
- Invest in those watersheds that can be restored

Education and Outreach

- CBC should design and conduct forums to address grants, agriculture, natural habitat, lessons learned
- Education about watershed stewardship, among general public, local people, and stakeholders outside of watershed
- Educate public about importance of headwaters in watershed management
- Articulate key questions for watershed management to public

- Develop new common value system among public for natural resource stewardship

Workshops & Training Programs

- Collaborate on watershed training courses

Project Tracking

- Agree to use NRPI to inventory all watershed projects each organization is funding and/or staffing

Monitoring

- Assess trends and conditions (are watershed conditions declining, holding, or improving)
- Coordinate with CALFED's Monitoring Committee's efforts
- Identify problems from natural and man-made sources
- Develop common methodology and terminology
- Allow flexibility to accommodate different funding levels with different timeline restrictions

Sustaining Rangelands, Forests, and Communities in the Modoc Region

Panel 1 - Perspectives on Natural Resource Issues

Moderator: Jim Chapman, Lassen County Board of Supervisors

Local rancher Jack Hanson explained that public lands are a very important component of industry operations in the region. Making a living is becoming difficult and local ranchers are eager to find solutions to current debates about the role of livestock grazing on public lands.

Modoc County Supervisor Nancy Huffman stressed the importance of private lands to the tax base of the region - where the vast majority of land is in public ownership. She expressed concerns that interest in adding even more land to the public domain could have serious adverse effects on local government programs.

Eagle Lake Audubon Society representative Gerald Nordstrom highlighted the importance of public land to recreation and local economies. He also stressed the need to protect and restore wildlands in the region so the public will continue to find the area attractive for recreation. Consulting forester Frank Stewart provided an overview of the public land management proposal developed by the Quincy Library Group. The proposal is for all of the Lassen and Plumas national forests as well as part of the Tahoe national forest. This is a community-developed set of management guidelines for providing fire protection, forest health, and watershed management.

Panel 2 - Collaboration Success Stories

Moderator: Linda Hanson, BLM Susanville Resource Area

Carolyn Cary described the Modoc County Land Use Committee that was formed to develop recommendations for public land management in Modoc County. The vast majority of land in Modoc County is in public ownership and most of the county is affected by land-use decisions on those lands. The committee was formed to provide a voice for local citizens in planning for lands administered by the USFS and BLM.

Retired BLM area manager Rex Cleary described the Modoc-Washoe Experimental Stewardship Committee. In order to provide a forum for public/private monitoring and

recommendations for public land management, the BLM and USFS formed this committee many years ago. Private consultant Dan Macon described the California Rangeland Trust. In 1998 the California Cattlemen's Association provided incentives for private rangeland owners to keep their lands as working ranches. Many environmental interests see rangeland management support of the trust as an attractive alternative to urban sprawl into wildlands.

Dwight Sanders, California State Lands Commission, described the progress of the Eagle Lake Interagency Board. The ELIB is a multi-agency coalition that is working together to restore conditions for the Eagle Lake Trout. The group is successful at protecting and restoring public and private lands that contribute to the quality of habitat in Eagle Lake and its tributaries.

Panel 3 - Improving Efforts for Sustaining the Rangelands, Forests, and Communities

Moderator: Hal Salwasser, PSW Research Station, US Forest Service

Acting Lassen National Forest Supervisor Jeff Withoe noted that there are many successful cooperative projects that are improving conditions throughout the region. However, the rate that forest fuels are accumulating in forests and invasive plants are spreading on rangelands is overshadowing the beneficial effects of local cooperation. A significant increase in resources will be needed to address this condition.

Local livestock industry representative Sean Curtis expressed concerns that the scale at which local project planning is done often misses important economic and management issues that operate at larger scales. Mr. Curtis suggested that the availability of livestock forage and timber should be examined at larger scales so that this information can be factored into project decisions in ways that preserve the industries involved.

Lassen County Supervisor Brian Dahle supported Mr. Curtis' concerns and noted the contributions of the ranching and timber industries to local economies. BLM Surprise Valley Resource Area manager Suzie Stokke described a new range allotment review process that seeks broad public involvement. While the process shows promise, it is time-consuming and will be difficult to do over large areas without supplemental resources to field units. She also described the use of "grass banks" as vacant grazing allotments that can be used by permittees when restoration or rest is needed in their traditional allotment.